

# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

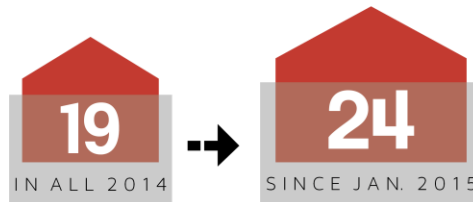
## TERROR THREAT SNAPSHOT JUNE 2015

THREAT

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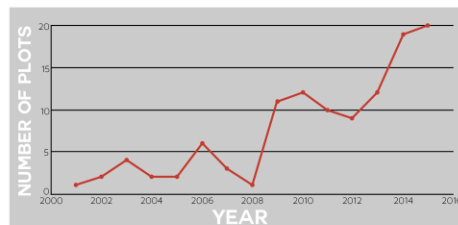
### ISIS LINKED PLOTS AGAINST WESTERN TARGETS



The rate of ISIS terror plots  
has already  
**DOUBLED**  
IN 2015

### HOMEGROWN TERROR PLOTS

116  
U.S. Terrorist Plots  
since 9/11



The number of homegrown  
terror plots has  
**TRIPLED**  
in the past 5 years

### FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

~40 AMERICANS  
RETURNED



**22,000 FOREIGN FIGHTERS** from ~100 Countries  
TRAVELED TO JOIN JIHADIST GROUPS

**4,000 WESTERNERS**  
TRAVELED

**200 AMERICANS** up from 150 Americans in January  
TRAVELED/ATTEMPTED

**80%**  
in foreign fighters  
from June of last year

### ISIS PROPAGANDA

Since January,



**200K**  
Supporter posts a day  
- up from 40k daily in 2014

HOMELAND HOUSE GOV

*This document is produced by the Majority Staff of the House Homeland Security Committee.*

## TERROR PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

*ISIS's terror campaign is spreading globally – the number of ISIS-linked terrorist plots this year has soared.*

### By the numbers

- Since early 2014, there have been 43 planned or executed ISIS-linked terror plots against Western targets, including ten inside in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- There have been more ISIS-linked plots against Western targets in the first six months of this year (24) than in all of 2014 (19).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

## Recent Developments

- [June 18](#): Samuel Rahamin Topaz, a resident of Fort Lee, New Jersey was arrested for his intent to travel abroad to join ISIS in Syria and for providing material support to the terror group. Topaz was a friend and coconspirator of Munther Saleh, arrested June 13. The two watched ISIS propaganda videos online depicting beheadings and discussed their plans to fight with ISIS by transiting different countries to ISIS-controlled territory in Syria.
- [June 17](#): Fared Mumuni was arrested after attempting to stab FBI agents searching his home in connection with an investigation stemming from the arrest of Munther Saleh. Authorities believe Mumuni conspired with Saleh to construct a pressure-cooker bomb, similar to those used in the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. Mumuni told federal investigators that he pledged allegiance to ISIS, planned to travel to ISIS-controlled territories to join the group, and if his efforts to join ISIS were frustrated, he intended to attack law enforcement officers.
- [June 16](#): Abdul Malik Abdul Kareem was indicted for providing weapons to Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi for use in the Garland, Texas, Muhammad cartoon attack on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Kareem also traveled with Simpson and Soofi to a remote desert area near Phoenix to practice shooting. Kareem allegedly lied to the FBI on numerous fronts, including saying that Simpson and Soofi did not ask him to participate. Kareem is charged with conspiracy, making false statements and interstate transportation of firearms with intent to commit a felony. The indictment also suggests that other people may have been involved in plotting the attack, saying that the three men “and others known and unknown to the grand jury” plotted the attack.
- [June 13](#): Munther Omar Saleh, a 20-year-old college student, was arrested after he and an unidentified conspirator ran towards an undercover law enforcement car near the Whitestone Bridge in New York. Saleh came under scrutiny after a Port Authority police officer saw him walking near the George Washington Bridge in New Jersey this past March. According to the FBI, Saleh conducted online research on how to prepare an explosive device for detonation — including research on pressure cooker bombs and other weaponry— in the New York metropolitan area on behalf of ISIS. Saleh was active on Twitter and tweeted his concern that al Qaeda was becoming “too moderate” in 2014. He also espoused pro-ISIS sympathies online and endorsed the Charlie Hebdo massacre in France and the Garland, Texas shooting attack.
- [June 2](#): Ussamah Abdullah Rahim of Roslindale, Massachusetts, was initially planning to behead an individual at some point in the future but advanced the timing of his plot and changed the target to law enforcement personnel. Rahim attacked Boston police officers and FBI agents who were attempting to question him before being neutralized. He was radicalized by ISIS and had been on authorities’ radar for several years. His nephew, David Wright, conspired with Rahim and was initially arrested for obstructing the investigation. A third associate, Nicholas Rovinski from Warwick, Rhode Island, also [in contact with](#) ISIS recruiters overseas, was arrested June 11<sup>th</sup> and charged as a co-conspirator.
- [May 3](#): Two ISIS sympathizers from Arizona, Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, attacked a Muhammad cartoon contest in Garland, Texas, before being neutralized by police. Simpson was convicted in 2011 for lying to federal authorities about his plans to travel to Somalia to carry out jihad. He interacted via Twitter with Syria-based ISIS propagandist and hacker Junaid Hussain and an ISIS recruiter named Mujahid Miski who was previously known to be operating from Somalia. The FBI reopened an investigation into Simpson in March 2015 after he posted pro-ISIS propaganda on social media.

*Homegrown terror has reached unprecedented levels as extremist groups press the offensive.*

## By the numbers

- Since September 11, 2001, there have been 116 U.S. terrorist cases involving homegrown violent jihadists. Over 80 percent of these cases, which include plotted attacks and attempts to join foreign terrorist organizations, have occurred or been discovered since 2009.<sup>3</sup>
- Authorities have arrested or charged at least 39 individuals in the United States this year in ISIS-related cases. The cases involve individuals: plotting attacks; attempting to travel to Syria; sending money, equipment and weapons to terrorists; falsifying statements to federal authorities; and failing to report a felony.<sup>4</sup>
- FBI Director James Comey recently said authorities have [hundreds](#) of open investigations of potential ISIS-inspired extremists that cover all 56 of the bureau's field offices. He also stated there may be hundreds or [thousands](#) of Americans who are taking in recruitment propaganda over social media applications: "It's like the devil sitting on their shoulders, saying 'kill, kill, kill.'"

## Recent Developments

- [June 11](#): Ali Shukri Amin, 17, of Manassas, Virginia, pleaded guilty to charges of conspiring to provide material support to ISIS after facilitating the travel of Reza Niknejad to Syria to join the group in January. Amin's Twitter account, which at one time counted more than 4,000 followers, provided advice and encouragement to ISIS and its supporters, including instructions on how to use virtual currency Bitcoin to raise funds for the terror group.
- [May 8](#): The Department of Defense announced that U.S. Northern Command ordered all facilities within the United States to upgrade their alert status to Force Protection Condition Bravo given the threat level posed by ISIS-inspired radicalization. The risk of ISIS sympathizers targeting military, law enforcement, and intelligence personnel [remains](#) high.
- [May 7](#): FBI Director Comey expressed concerns over terrorists' use of encrypted communications and the impact it has on law enforcement authorities' ability to detect and prevent acts of terror: "The haystack is the entire country. We are looking for the needles, but increasingly the needles are unavailable to us... This is the 'going dark' problem in living color. There are Elton Simpsons out there that I have not found and I cannot see."

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## FOREIGN FIGHTERS

*Jihadists are flocking to the battlefield unabated and acquiring terror capabilities.*

## By the numbers

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<sup>3</sup> This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Congressional Research Service and the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

- More than [22,000 fighters](#) from 100 countries have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join extremists—the largest convergence of Islamist terrorists in world history. The number of foreign fighters who have traveled to battlefields *globally* exceeds [25,000](#).
- Approximately [4,000 Westerners](#) have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight.<sup>5</sup>
- An estimated [550](#) Western women have traveled to the conflict zone.
- More than [200 Americans](#) are estimated to have traveled – or attempted to travel – to Syria to fight. This figure is up 33 percent from the beginning of 2015.
- Around [40 American fighters](#) who traveled to Syria have returned to the United States as of March 2015.
- In addition to fighters joining Sunni extremist groups like ISIS and Jabhat al Nusrah in Syria, an estimated [5,000-7,000](#) Lebanese Hezbollah members and other Shi'a militants are fighting alongside the Bashar al Assad regime.

## Recent Developments

- [May 27](#): Leon Nathan Davis of August, Georgia, who has been in law enforcement custody since October 2014, admitted to trying to join ISIS after purchasing a ticket to Turkey.
- [May 26](#): Asher Abid Khan of Spring, Texas, was arrested after traveling to Turkey with the intention of joining ISIS. Khan was persuaded by his family to return to the U.S., but he and a foreign fighter facilitator helped another individual join ISIS in Syria.
- [May 22](#): Nader Elhuzayel and Muhanad Badawi, both of Anaheim, California, were arrested for attempting to join ISIS. Elhuzayel attempted to board a plane to Turkey using a ticket paid for by Badawi, who indicated he planned to travel to the region at a later date. The two communicated via social media about ISIS and conducting terrorist attacks. Elhuzayel expressed his support for Garland attacker Elton Simpson on Twitter.
- [May 14](#): Bilal Abood, a naturalized U.S. citizen who had worked as a translator for the U.S. military in his home country of Iraq, was arrested for lying to federal investigators. Abood reportedly traveled to Syria and joined the Free Syrian Army before returning to the United States. In a Twitter post in 2014, he pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.
- A senior State Department official said almost all foreign fighters are still entering Syria [through Turkey](#).
- France continues to be the top European source for fighters joining extremists in Syria ([~1,200](#)). French authorities estimate that nearly [500](#) French fighters are currently in Syria and Iraq. The top overall source for foreign fighters is Tunisia ([~3,000](#)).

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## FOREIGN JIHADIST NETWORKS & SAFE HAVENS

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<sup>5</sup> National Counterterrorism Center Deputy Director John Mulligan, testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee, June 3, 2015.

*Islamist terror groups are carving our greater sanctuary across the Middle East. ISIS is accelerating its global expansion while al Qaeda deepens its roots in the region.*

## By the numbers

- ISIS now has a direct presence, affiliates, or groups pledging support in at least 16 countries, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.<sup>6</sup>
- ISIS controlled 11 cities in Iraq and 10 cities in Syria as of early June.<sup>7</sup>

## Recent Developments

- ISIS launched multiple offensives across Syria over the last month. It wrested control of the strategic city of [Palmyra](#) in central Syria from the Assad regime, attacked anti-Assad elements north of [Aleppo](#) close to the Turkish border, and seized control of the [al Tanf](#) border crossing.
- ISIS also seized control of [Ramadi](#), the capital of Iraq's largely Sunni-populated Anbar province along the Syrian border. ISIS had been attempting to take over Ramadi for almost a year and a half. It took Fallujah at the beginning of that offensive. ISIS vied for control of areas in Bayji and a nearby refinery complex over the last month; however, Iraqi forces and allied militias [appear](#) to be making gains in recovering lost terrain there.
- ISIS-affiliated militants have been consolidating control in Sirte, Libya, recently [seizing](#) an airport complex there. An estimated [3,000 fighters](#) in Libya are aligned with ISIS. ISIS has reportedly sent fighters in Libya [funding and military trainers](#) over the last several months. It has had a base in the coastal city of [Darnah](#), which was at one point the [top source](#) of foreign fighters for al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), ISIS's predecessor.
- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been forging [alliances](#) with and co-opting local Sunni tribes in southern Yemen since it defeated Yemeni security forces there in April. Local residents reported that AQAP [seized](#) banks, government buildings, and military bases in the southern city of Mukalla.
- AQAP leader Nasir al Wuhayshi was [killed](#) in a targeted [strike](#) in Yemen. Wuhayshi served as deputy to al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri and helped build AQAP following a 2006 prison break. AQAP military [commander](#) Qasim al Raymi has been [named](#) his successor.
- Al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra, is a prominent force in the anti-Assad regime coalition – [supported](#) by Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia – that has captured [Idlib](#) and other areas in northern Syria since March.
- A cell of veteran al Qaeda operatives in Syria plotting external attacks (Khorasan Group) has maintained a presence in northwest Syria, where U.S. and coalition forces have targeted [buildings and training camps](#) associated with it over the last month.

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## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

<sup>6</sup> Data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

<sup>7</sup> These figures are derived from assessments of territorial control conducted by the Institute for the Study of War.

**ISIS aggressively exploits social media in order to recruit fighters, disseminate propaganda, and trigger attacks in the West.**

- Since the beginning of this year, ISIS has pushed out more than [1,700 “products,”](#) including videos, photographic reports, and magazines over social media.<sup>8</sup>
- There are an estimated [200,000](#) pro-ISIS messages posted on Twitter every day.
- ISIS released the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of its English-language magazine “Dabiq” in May. The articles praises the attackers who targeted the Garland, Texas, cartoon contest, exhorts followers to commit terrorist acts in the United States and other Western countries, and touts the “benefits” it offers people living in its territory.

**The risk of Islamist terrorists exploiting refugee and migrant flows to travel freely remains high as underscored in a recent arrest.**

- Italian authorities arrested Abdel Majid Touil, a 22-year-old Moroccan terror [suspect](#) who arrived in Italy on a migrant boat and spent several months there. Touil is suspected of being part of the terror network behind the March National Bardo Museum attack in Tunisia.
- ISIS-aligned militants have been taxing migrant boat smugglers and using them to [transport](#) militants, according to a Libyan government adviser citing conversations with smugglers. Reports in 2014 [indicated](#) that ISIS operatives had discussed using refugee flows into Europe as a “Trojan Horse” for its operatives. Italian officials have reportedly [expressed](#) concerns over terrorists’ potential exploitation of these flows.

**The Obama Administration released additional detainees from Guantanamo Bay this month and is formulating a broader plan to shutter the facility.**

- Defense Secretary Ashton Carter [said](#) he is working with the White House on a closure plan for Guantanamo to be submitted to Congress.
- The Defense Department announced it transferred six al Qaeda detainees – several who reportedly served as [bodyguards](#) for Osama bin Laden – from Guantanamo to Oman. Almost [30 percent](#) of released detainees from Guantanamo are known or suspected to have returned to the battlefield.
- The travel ban on the “Taliban Five” – freed in exchange for now-charged Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl – will remain in place temporarily. Restrictions enforced by the Qatari government were set to [expire](#) on June 1, 2015, but will now be extended until negotiations involving the U.S., Qatar, and Afghanistan are concluded.

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<sup>8</sup> National Counterterrorism Center Deputy Director John Mulligan, testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee, June 3, 2015.